

INDIRECT CAUSE OF DUEL TO DEATH IN DARK DENIES SHE LURED SCREEN DAREDEVIL TO FATE

Pretty Alice Thornton Insists She Did Not "Squeal" on Jack Bergen and His Love Affair With Wife of His Close Friend and Real Benefactor

BUT AGREES HER HINTS AROUSED SUSPICIONS OF MAN WHO FIRED FATAL SHOT

Stories of Latest Movie Love Tragedy Conflict and "Mysterious Blonde" Finds Herself Threatened by Trial as Accomplice in Murder

DID nineteen-year-old Alice Thornton lure "Daredevil" Jack Bergen to his death?

Or is she the innocent victim of a chain of bitter circumstances which slowly and ponderously tangled about her with cruel and impersonal precision?

Does she follow in the long train of fair women scorned, whom jealousy transformed, whose love, tintured with disillusion, burned into the cold livid flame of hate?

Or did she pass through the portals of the lives of Cline and Bergen, unconscious of the imminent disaster she was bringing to them? Unconscious of the conflagration she was destined to kindle?

One man is dead, killed by the friend who trusted him. One man is behind prison bars waiting for the scales of Justice to swing. One woman, stunned by the torture of many regrets and griefs, sits at home, helpless and alone, save for her mocking memories.

And Alice Thornton, who will come on trial on October 9 along with George Cline and Charles Scullion for the murder of Bergen, desperately hopes that no jury will misinterpret the part she played in the drama which ended in death.

Mysterious Blonde Was Real Key to Mystery

Without Alice Thornton, the story of the woman wronged and a duel to the death is a story of ellipses and inexplicable gaps. Without the identification of "the mysterious blonde," who was seen to enter the Cline home at Edgewater, N. J., just before the killing, as Alice Thornton, detectives investigating the case were baffled.

Alice Thornton, light-hearted, lithesome, trips through the more or less completed story, as some Pippa who passes, but who bears pain rather than peace.

She was a filing clerk for a private banker in Wall Street, and since the death of her father has lived with her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Harris, of New York. Her blonde curls and her trim figure gave her the appearance of a happy child, her eyes expressing endless surprise that life is so entertaining.

Her days passed by comfortably and well, much the same as the days of any other nineteen-year-old girl's do, until one fateful day she met Jack Bergen.

"I met him two years ago," she said. "A girl friend introduced us, and I liked him."

The air of romance hung about Jack Bergen. Immaculately dressed, trimmed and pruned to the point of femininity, he had the heart of a rugged two-fisted man. He played in the movies! He doubled for Eugene O'Brien and other heroes of the silver screen when especially daring feats were to be done! Apparently, he was single and graced with a strange attraction for women.

Alice's grandfather protested against their friendship. He said Bergen was too dressed up, too careful with his fingernails, too anxious about the cut of his hair. But his objections seemed unwarranted to his granddaughter.

She continued to see Bergen, and her friendship for him ripened into love.

"I didn't know that he was married and that he had deserted his wife and baby," said Miss Thornton. "It was only later that I found that out. When I asked Jack if he had been married he admitted it, but he insisted that the marriage had been annulled, and I believed him."

It was a day in June of this year that Miss Thornton met the Clines. Bergen introduced her to the cozy household. George Cline was a location man for the Fox Film Company, and Bergen appeared to be one of his most intimate friends. She met them at the Cline home in Edgewater, and, dramatically enough, on this first day she began to suspect that her sweetheart was paying "too much attention to Mrs. Bergen."

Suspected Couple After First Trip to Cline Home

Mrs. Bergen is a small woman with the figure of a boy. Her deep-set dark eyes burn sadly out of a pale and lined face. She is twenty-six years old and the mother of two

depressed her, but he noticed that she herself continued to act in an unusual manner the remainder of the day.

Wife Confessed Liaison With "Daredevil Jack"

Cline learned that his wife had been out with Bergen. He questioned Bergen and Bergen admitted he had persuaded Mrs. Cline to take a drink.

More and more suspicious, the husband continued to ply his wife with questions. He recalled what Alice Thornton had told him a few weeks before at the dance. He persisted in his investigation, but apparently got no further until the day before the murder on August 25.

At that time his wife made a clean breast of the whole affair. She said that she became intoxicated after Bergen had forced the drink on her. While she was under the influence of the liquor, she said, Bergen attacked her. Immediately following the confession, both Cline and his wife telephoned to Bergen, urging him to come to their home in Undercliff avenue. At first

On the night of August 25, a man, bleeding and mortally wounded, staggered out of the Edgewater home. A shot had pierced the night air, and a taxicab driver, his car parked nearby, thought of highwaymen. When he saw a man stumbling toward him he became frightened and sped off, but not before the man with the death-face tried to grasp the running board of his car. Later, David Landau, the taxi driver, who had carried Bergen to the Cline home, met a policeman. Together, they returned and found Bergen lying in the road, three hundred feet from the Cline home.

When Bergen died a few moments later in the Edgewater police station, a blood-stained note was found in his coat pocket. He had evidently scrawled it while he lay dying in the road. It read: "George Cline killed me."

Another note in the dead man's pocket proved that he had expected death at the hands of Cline. This note ran: "If by chance I am shot in the next few weeks, it will be done by a George Cline, alias George Wals, of Edgewater, N. J. For reasons un-

but his violent host was upon him in a moment, pressing the gun into the small of his back. He forced him into the room again. Mrs. Cline screamed and rushed between the two men. Miss Thornton grabbed her.

"It's wrong to say I did that because I wanted George to kill Jack," added Miss Thornton. "I was afraid the gun might go off, and hurt Mrs. Cline, and I pulled her away."

This happened in the front hall on the first floor.

"Letting his hand which held the gun



George Cline

known to me, he is threatening me. No doubt a German Lueger, caliber .45, will be used, as it is a favorite of his many guns. I am John Bergen, 214 East 115th street."

But the events that happened at the Edgewater home, that dark night, were not fully known until "the mysterious blonde" whom Landau, the taxi-driver, had seen enter there was identified as Alice Thornton.

Denies She Lured Man to His Death in Duel

"The intimation that I lured Jack to the Cline home out of jealousy is ridiculous," insists Alice Thornton. "I believe that George Cline wanted to ask Bergen for the last time whether he had been intimate with Mrs. Cline or not, and he wanted to be there to tell what I had seen, in the event that Bergen denied it."

Cline phoned Miss Thornton in the afternoon, and asked her to come to his house that evening. He did not explain his reason for inviting her, but suggested that Bergen would be one of the guests.

"I understood that he wanted to settle the matter once and for all. I got there about 9 o'clock. Mrs. Cline's little son and daughter were over at their grandmother's home which is next door. Mrs. Cline and her two brothers, George Cline, Bergen and I were in the house."

"I was determined to confront Bergen with the whole business. He was stunned when he saw me. We had come over from Manhattan on the same ferry. When he spied me in the same room with the others, I guess, he realized there was no use in lying."

Cline appeared in his shirt sleeves. He accused Bergen point-blank, according to Miss Thornton, of having had improper relations with his wife. Bergen apparently had made up his mind to brazen it out.

"He threw out his chest," explained Miss Thornton, "and admitted his conduct. George Cline raked him over the coals."

"I know I'm a rat and all that," Bergen is reported to have answered. And he attempted to justify himself according to Cline, by saying that all women were traitors to their husbands, and by making a slurring remark about Mrs. Cline.

"George was infuriated," continued Miss Thornton. "He drew a pistol, and broke it to show that it was loaded."

He dared Bergen to go upstairs with him.

Fight in Dark Offered By Angry Husband

"I'll give you another gun," cried Cline. "We'll turn out the light and fight!"

This cowed Bergen, said Miss Thornton. "He started moving for the door,

drop. George told Charles Scullion to go upstairs and get the other gun for Bergen. Charlie went upstairs, and he came down almost immediately. But we were all so worked up I don't remember whether he brought the other gun or not."

Miss Thornton does remember seeing Bergen with a gun in his hand.

"George and Jack went upstairs alone. I don't know whether they both had guns. Indistinctly, I remember hearing George offer Jack the first gun or the one upstairs. And I do know that Jack had a gun in his hand when he went upstairs after George."

Mrs. Cline tried to follow the men, but Alice held her back. "I didn't want her to get hurt," said Alice.

In the little room downstairs, the distraught wife, her brothers and Miss Thornton waited and listened. The suspense was maddening. They could hear the footsteps of the two men slowly climbing the stairs, and then there was silence—deep oppressive silence, punctuated by the soft sobbing of Mrs. Cline.

Suddenly there came to the ears of the waiting four, a sound of shuffling feet. Then a shot. It sounded from directly over the heads of the listeners—from Cline's bedroom. A second later Bergen stumbled down the stairway and out the front door. Cline followed him, panting and excited, but unarmed.

"After that I am not certain what happened," said Miss Thornton. "I grabbed my hat, jumped into a taxi and sped to the ferry."

What transpired upstairs in the bedroom may never be known. Cline, according to the prosecution, has given two versions of the story.

Struggle in Dark Preceded Fatal Shot

Miss Thornton has stated that she cherishes faith in George Cline's second story—that he had given Bergen a pistol, and that Bergen had tried to double-cross him as he turned to switch off the light; that in the hand-to-hand grappling for the gun it had exploded.

"I don't believe George had a revolver in his hand when he went upstairs. Bergen did have one. I think Charlie Scullion laid the other gun somewhere upstairs for his brother-in-law."

The bullet that entered Bergen's left breast and injured the spinal cord was found lodged in the stairs outside the second-story bedroom. It was from a .45 Colt automatic. Blood stains marked the retreat of Bergen down the

stairs, through the front door and along the street for 200 yards.

"I hope George Cline will be acquitted," Alice Thornton is reported to have said. "Bergen was a cur and deserved what he got. Jack was wild, and petted, and selfish. Mrs. Cline is weak and too easily led, but Mr. Cline is a good man."

Miss Thornton cannot understand why she has been arrested.



Alice Thornton



Mrs. Cline and her brother, George Scullion

didn't squeal" on Jack and Mrs. Bergen. The killing was an unexpected one, no one anything could be said.

Cline Gave Two Stories of Killing of Bergen

Originally, Cline's version of the killing, which he later repudiated, stating that he was drunk when he had given it, was that on the way upstairs, Bergen had whipped out a gun, and that in the attempt to wrest it from him, the gun had exploded.

In his second version he admitted that both he and Bergen had guns; that while he was turning out the light, he noticed that Bergen pointed his gun at his unprotected back. Cline said "I did not lure Jack to his death. I was not jealous and vindictive. I

which role is no pleasure, no part to be paid generously for, except with pain.

The conclusion of the scenario—one can only hope—will be as happy as endings can be. But it will be never so happy as a moving picture on the silver screen. If Alice is convicted, life ends for her, and her wickedness will only be aggravated. If Alice is acquitted, there will remain for her the gloom of memory.

Fortunate are the movie stars who can throw off the part she played in their story, with the costumes they wear; who wash away all the heartache of a character with the paint from their faces.

For Alice—no matter how her story ends—the tragedy of the part she played will remain with her always; a costume cosmetics which will burn into her life, corrosively, forever.

hand, and that his own pistol went off during the ensuing struggle.

"If I could have got close to my husband," says Mrs. Cline, "I could have stopped it all, but Alice wouldn't let me. I can't remember much. I don't remember seeing any guns. When Bergen said he didn't want to fight, I was glad. I didn't want them to fight. But then I heard him say, 'All right, I'll fight,' and I rushed to my husband. I wanted peace. But they wouldn't let me go to him."

"I met this boy Jack three years ago," Cline is reported to have said. "He was a corner loafer and a professional dancer. I made a man of him. Made him work, and even spent \$1000 to get him out of jail in Atlantic City. And when we were up at Saranac I naturally left my wife and children with him. I trusted him."

"I'll give you another gun!" cried Cline. "We'll turn out the light and fight!"

"And to think he should play a trick like this on me, after all I did for him, and I might even have forgiven him, if he hadn't called my wife a vile name."

Mountain Girl Gets News of Dead Man

An aftermath of the gruesome story was the presence the other day before the police, near Saranac Lake, of a girl who gave her name as Maude Boyen. She wanted to know when Jack Bergen would come back to the mountains. She said she was his sweetheart.

She had not heard of the death of Bergen. Her coming to the police to look for him was an extraordinary coincidence. When the police told her that her lover was dead, that he was a married man, she trembled pitifully.

She had met him when he was doing stunts for the pictures in the neighborhood. He had become her hero.

"Jack promised me he would write to me when he left," she sobbed. "I searched all the mails, but no letter came. And now I'll never see him again."

And this young woman has disappeared. The police near Saranac have been unable to find her. She was dark and piquant looking, a slender girl of the hills—and she has perhaps gone back to her home in the Adirondacks with her heart-pain.

And tragedy of this sort is as far-reaching as it is often unexpected. Little did Alice Thornton suppose within two years, after she had set eyes on her handsome Jack, that he would be sitting, charged with murder, behind the iron bars of a prison.

She cannot believe it today, though even now she awaits trial. And the scales of blind justice may tip one way or they may tip another, and her young and heretofore happy life will be ended or begun again, depending on how the grim scales swing.

Maybe Jury Can Get Real Story of Tragedy

It's an inexplicable world for mortals. For many of them, it is as a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing, a philosopher has said. For Alice it is a moving-picture story, with all of life's mysteries, griefs and ironies thrown in. And she is one of the tortured actors—the heroine, perhaps—